

Population-based Estimate of the Burden of Diarrheal Illness: FoodNet 1996-1997

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The burden of foodborne diseases in the United States is not precisely known. To determine the incidence of diarrheal illness and consequent use of health care resources, we conducted a population-based survey. As part of the CDC's Emerging Infections Program, Foodborne Diseases Active Surveillance Network (FoodNet), randomly selected individuals in the California, Connecticut, Georgia, Minnesota, and Oregon catchment areas were interviewed by telephone from July 1996 through June 1997 using a random digit dialing, single stage sampling method (Genesys-ID). In the 12 months of the study, 9003 people were interviewed; 379 persons with chronic diarrhea were excluded from this analysis. Eleven percent ($\pm 0.8\%$) of respondents reported a diarrheal illness in the 28 days prior to interview (131,256 diarrheal episodes per 100,000 person-years). Among persons with diarrhea, 7.5% ($\pm 2.1\%$) visited a physician for treatment of symptoms (9921 per 100,000 person-years). Among those who sought treatment, 22% ($\pm 10.4\%$) were asked by the physician to provide a stool specimen for testing (2032 per 100,000 person-years) and 6.6% ($\pm 5.0\%$) were hospitalized (598 per 100,000 person-years). In conclusion, an estimated 340,000,000 episodes of acute diarrheal illness occur in the United States each year, and are a major burden in the population and the health care system. Future studies are ongoing to determine the causes of diarrheal illness in the community.

Suggested citation:

Herikstad H, Vugia D, Hadler J, Blake P, Deneen V, Townes J, Yang S, Angulo F, and FoodNet. Population-based Estimate of the Burden of Diarrheal Illness: FoodNet 1996-1997. 1st International Conference on Emerging Infectious Diseases. Atlanta, GA, March 1998.